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**MID-TERM PROGRAMMATIC EVALUATION OF
USAID/SOUTHERN AFRICA'S PROGRAM TO "IMPROVE
MANAGEMENT OF SHARED RIVER BASINS"**

**Report to USAID/Southern Africa,
Gaborone, Botswana**

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Executive Summary

USAID commissioned a mid-term evaluation of the Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project (IRBM) in order to assess progress and consider possible directions for further program development after 2008. Conducted with limited resources over a relatively brief period, the assessment identified significant positive accomplishments, despite a number of issues and challenges.

Accomplishments of IRBM in its first two years have included contributions to: establishing a Secretariat for OKACOM and transferring responsibility for the Secretariat's ongoing support to regional partners; a pioneering river basin organization (RBO) workshop; cross-boundary river basin management networks; and significantly strengthened relationships with partners. Challenges for the project include institutional, technical, and financial sustainability; certain differences between the priorities of USAID and those of regional partners; uncertainties about future roles and activities of GEF; enhancing the relationship with SADC; and improving IRBM-related communications with Angolan partners through increased bilingualism.

As requested by USAID, the assessment team recommended program strategies and actions for the remainder of the current program, 2007-2008: assure smooth and effective transfer of the Secretariat responsibility to OKACOM, assist OKACOM in assuring a structure for technical oversight and assistance functions, increase the focus on assisting OKACOM with longer-term priorities (see below), and take appropriate steps in relationships with SADC and, as possible, GEF.

For USAID regional environmental efforts beyond 2008, the team recommended two emphases: a focus on strengthening OKACOM's roles in establishing sustainable regional institutions for future water resource management and transboundary cooperation and assisting partners to transfer lessons learned from experiences with integrated river basin management among major river basins in Southern Africa.

MID-TERM PROGRAMMATIC EVALUATION OF USAID/SOUTHERN AFRICA’S PROGRAM TO ‘IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF SHARED RIVER BASINS’

1. INTRODUCTION

For a little more than two years, USAID has been addressing regional environmental issues by strengthening multi-national river basin management, focused on the Okavango River Basin. The Okavango Integrated River Basin Project is a four-year commitment, 2004-2008, in support of this objective, emphasizing capacity-building for regional river basin management.

Late in 2006, the Mission commissioned a mid-term evaluation to assess progress in reaching objectives and consider possible directions for further program development after 2008. “Evaluation” may be too strong a term for a participative diagnostic process so early in a program’s lifetime, given the long-term nature of impacts from many of USAID’s development programs, challenges of rapid institution-building in developing countries, and continuing changes in the institutional context of the project. But a small team, operating over only a few weeks, has done its best to determine how program activities match up with regional needs, when several other international donors are active as well, and to offer thoughts about the most promising directions for the future.

1.1. Scope and Objectives of the Evaluation Effort

The evaluation focused on assessing progress toward improved management of the Okavango River basin, with emphasis on institutional strengthening and biodiversity conservation. As next steps were considered, particularly in light of the new U.S. Framework for Foreign Assistance, the benefits of maintaining continuity of existing initiatives were assessed and compared with

other opportunities or approaches that might be more effective in achieving foreign assistance objectives for water management and biodiversity conservation from a regional platform. For the current project, the evaluation assessed what activities are the best prospects to achieve existing strategic goals and results, to the degree that they are still valid and appropriate for a USAID regional program.

Within constraints of very limited time, combined with an extremely complex project and enormous quantities of documentation, the evaluation team reviewed available USAID source materials relevant to the project, and it conducted a brief but intensive program of country visits and other field work to investigate project accomplishments, issues, and partner/stakeholder viewpoints. Evaluation questions are listed in the evaluation scope of work, which was developed in consultation with partners and customers and made available to a wide range of program and project partners and stakeholders in advance of the field work (see Appendix A below).

1.2 How the Evaluation Was Conducted

The evaluation included three components. First, team members reviewed program and project documents, consulted key program leaders and participants, and identified issues to explore. Second, team members visited Angola, Namibia, and Botswana to consult local and other (e.g., international donor) stakeholders and institutions and add personal knowledge of project activities, processes, and impacts (see Appendix B below). Third, team members consulted with USAID/Southern Africa about the larger context of long-term regional environmental program development, along with developing its conclusions and recommendations. The main focus was not on a scorecard for the past but on a shared, consultative view of how USAID's regional environmental program can contribute to "transformational development" in the region's future. One of the innovations associated with this evaluation was that, from the outset, the evaluation was conducted as an "open" process, with the scope of work and other information posted on an internet site and distributed widely to stakeholders in the region.

1.3 Content of the Report

This report first summarizes the program and the Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project, along with: USAID’s objectives, intended results, and indicators for monitoring performance; program management and partnerships; and the program’s changing context during the 2004-2006 period. It then assesses the progress of the program and project during the 2004-2006 period, along with issues raised by the learning experience to date. It continues by recommending strategies and actions for the remaining project period (to September 2008), along with issues and options for USAID regional environmental program development after 2008. It concludes by summarizing conclusions and recommendations.

2. SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAM

This project is still early in its evolution in a development context where significant results often require commitments of a decade or more, and it has had to cope with and adjust to frequent changes in project budgets and at least the details associated with project objectives. As a result, it is difficult to conduct a “program evaluation” in the usual sense, because it is too early for many of the project’s initiatives to show significant development outcomes and because the scorecard has shifted as the project has evolved. The sections below consider what can be learned from the experience to date that can inform the design of future activities.

2.1 Program Origins and Purposes

The Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project (IRBM) had its origins in discussion as early as the 1980s about a need for community-based regional natural resource management in Southern Africa. Initial interests in an activity in the Limpopo River Basin were redirected early in this decade to attention to the Okavango River Basin. There were issues at the outset related to USAID coordination (or the lack thereof) with national governments and other donors in the region. In 2003, USAID/Southern Africa prepared a new Mission strategy for 2004-2010 that included a significant Okavango basin management activity, to be implemented through a major contractor. IRBM was the result: a four-year (2004-2008) project led by ARD, Inc., through an

IQC (a flexible contracting mechanism available through USAID Headquarters). The project is coordinated by the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) and is focused in large part on assisting OKACOM in building its capacities for integrated regional river basin management.

In broad terms, as agreed between USAID and OKACOM, IRBM has three components: (1) strengthening OKACOM and member states; (2) information management for improved decision making, and (3) community participation. USAID's interests in the project also include (a) strengthening institutions for regional coordination and cooperation and (b) strengthening institutions and practices for biodiversity conservation in the region.

By USAID standards, this regional project is relatively small, with total annual budget support of \$2.5 million in FY 2004, \$2.3 million in 2005, and \$2.2 million in 2006. Estimates of future funding remain uncertain, but they are projected to be in the \$1.5 - \$1.8 million per year range.

2.2 Program Strategic Objectives, Intended Results, and Performance Indicators

IRBM was designed as a vehicle for achieving USAID's Strategic Objective (SO) 17: *Strengthen regional capacity for improved management of shared river basins*. This SO includes two Intermediate Results (IRs): #1 – Improved protection of biodiversity and provision of ecological services; and #2 – Strengthened institutional capacity for basin management. The SO and both IRs are associated with several performance indicators: each with a unit of measure, a description of the method for data collection, and annual targets for monitoring progress. These metrics are developed and periodically revised in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, especially OKACOM and OBSC (see below).

2.3 Program Management and Partnerships

IRBM is implemented through a four-year contract with ARD, Inc., a well-known U.S.-based consulting firm. ARD's responsibilities are defined by the terms of its contract, which has changed as the project has evolved. As of the time of this evaluation, Amendment #9 to the contract was in the pipeline (in less than two and one-half years). ARD has formed a project office and team, based in Gaborone, including leaders of the individual project components.

IRBM's principal partner is the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM), formed in 1994 by the three riparian nations sharing the basin: Angola, Botswana, and Namibia. OKACOM receives technical assistance from the Okavango Basin Steering Committee (OBSC). IRBM has also worked in collaboration with international donor organizations (especially GTZ and Sida), regional organizations (especially SADC), national and local government and non-governmental organizations, and private sector groups active in the region. A very wide range of partnerships is described in project documents, and some of the partnerships are very active and productive (see below).

2.4 The Program's Context during the Period 2004-2006

USAID/Southern Africa's environmental program in general and IRBM in particular have seen constant changes, or potentials for change, over only a few years (Table 1). Several times each year, strategies have been modified, objectives restated, budgets revised, and/or activities added. This pattern of change has required great flexibility and adaptability on the part of both the USAID regional mission and its IRBM implementing partner, ARD, and it has added to challenges in achieving specific activity targets over the first two-year period of the project.

**Table 1. USAID/Southern Africa Environmental Program Evolution
(partial listing)**

2003-2004	Contractors assist Mission in preparing new Environmental Strategy for 2004-2010. Final plan assumed \$18.6m (>\$3m/yr) for Okavango Basin Program, and \$17.5m for contracted IRBM “Activity”	“Improved” basin management” not defined. Biodiversity not integrated. Strategy and design assume inclusion of significant community enterprise component.
July 2004	Strategy approved but budget (future funding) uncertain; now estimated at 30% less than Strategic Plan levels. New guidance: funding will depend on criteria and performance	Community component dropped from USAID’s budget for activity (contractor). Emphasis on supporting a new strategy for Africa.
Sept 2004	USAID signs contract with ARD Inc under IQC to implement project; 4 yrs @ \$1.5m/yr (\$6m total). (Mission retained some funding for proposed cross-cutting support objective). 73% of funding from biodiversity earmark.	Contract budget is half the amount assumed in Strategy. Community component to depend on assessment of niche in first year, and availability of funds
July-Sept 2005	Amendment 3 negotiated with ARD to replace SOW to better reflect priorities from stakeholder strategic planning workshop, biodiversity indicators, and increase total estimated cost by \$650k (contract Total Estimated Cost, TEC = \$6.65m)	The revised SOW formed basis for USAID and project level PMP and indicators. The additional funding allowed inclusion of community activities in SOW.
Mar 05-now	Multiple studies, reviews and HQ exchanges Over future of RCSA – Proposal on table to move/integrate Regional Mission with USAID in South Africa (Pretoria)	Questions about future of Regional Mission increased budgetary uncertainties and made forward planning difficult.
Jan-Apr 2006	Amendments 5 & 6 negotiated with ARD include \$450k and \$101k in new funding to: (a) expand project efforts in biodiversity conservation and achievement of SO results per Washington guidance for Strategic Objectives and biodiversity programs, (b) modify reports & deliverables to emphasize stakeholder participation, (c) implement 3 small activities with Botswana Trust Funds (\$101k) and (d) incorporate component for SADC activities. These amendments bring TEC to \$7.2m	The amendments expanded program activities and counterparts, and increased emphasis on a results framework and biodiversity indicators per strategic planning and guidance from Washington; that guidance would be changed again a few months later. In practice, some stakeholder participation requirements appeared useful, but additional work in Botswana was not directly related to core program results.
March 2006-	USAID announces Foreign Assistance Reform. New procedures and criteria for planning, reporting and funds allocations. Former system with SOs & Annual Reports replaced. Funding to use new set of standard program definitions and indicators across agencies. Missions to develop joint plans and budgets with other federal agencies in each country.	Ongoing process that continues in 2007 with new guidelines and changes being communicated to field Missions each month. This has increased uncertainty about future funding and program direction. It also indicated that reductions were likely for regional programs.

Moreover, the context is complicated by the fact that the project is not very large, compared with some other international assistance efforts (especially proposed GEF roles) and by a need to work in two languages (Angola is Portuguese-speaking).

In addition, the project is sometimes caught between two sets of driving forces that are not identical in what they are asking for. From one direction, in a sense top-down, USAID is focused on its agency's priorities and the use of relatively specific statements of objectives and intended results. From the other direction, the project has cultivated a "service provider" relationship with partners, asking OKACOM and others "What assistance do you want?" and seeking to respond to requests. In this bottom-up sense, requests for assistance do not always match up perfectly with directives from above, which has added further complexities to the project context (see 3.2.2.2 below).

3. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS, 2004-2006

As explained above, this "evaluation" is a relatively big-picture diagnostic assessment, focused not on detailed components of the Mission's strategic objective or of IRBM per se but on the major underlying themes and purposes of the USAID regional environmental program for Southern Africa.

In the sub-sections below, we summarize our findings about major accomplishments to date and major issues for the project in its first two years.

3.1 Summary of Major Accomplishments and Issues

We find that in its first two years the IRBM project has had significant positive institutional impacts, despite a number of issues and challenges. It has been notable for its responsiveness to requests for assistance from OKACOM, the regional institution for river basin management in the Okavango River Basin, and in its flexibility as needs and contexts have changed. It is very effectively led by USAID and ARD, with part-time assistance from ORNL, all of whose key

figures are impressively competent, committed, productive, and superb in their relationships with partners and counterparts. This is a very impressive leadership team.

To some degree, at least, some of the notable accomplishments in the first two years may have come at a price, however. Although other accomplishments have been realized as well, the emphasis on organizational institution-building for OKACOM has probably reduced the levels of management attention and resources available for other components of the project. In fact, the project's exceptional attention to "service provision" to OKACOM and many other partners and activities has probably detracted from a focus on some of the project's stated objectives, although the OKACOM accomplishments would likely not have been possible otherwise.

For answers to the "key questions" listed in the evaluation scope of work, see Appendix C.

3.2 Major Accomplishments

3.2.1 Establishing a Secretariat for OKACOM

OKACOM was established by agreement among Angola, Botswana, and Namibia in 1994, but as of the startup of IRBM in 2004 this regional institution still lacked staff capacities to facilitate its work, although national commissioners met periodically. When the new USAID project, defined with OKACOM as its principal local counterpart, asked OKACOM what assistance would be most useful in moving the institution toward a capacity for integrated river basin management, the request was for assistance in establishing a Secretariat to provide continuing staff support. In direct response, an Interim Secretariat was established – an adjunct of IRBM – as a first step toward providing staff support for OKACOM operations. The Interim Secretariat demonstrated to the Commission and its constituencies what could be accomplished when it had staff available to carry out continuing administrative tasks and other duties that Commissioners are too busy to undertake themselves. OKACOM representatives informed the evaluation team that this assistance was a vitally important step toward realizing OKACOM's potential as an asset for regional river basin management.

3.2.2 Succeeding in Transferring Responsibility for the OKACOM Secretariat to Regional Partners

As important for regional institutional capacity-building as establishing the interim Secretariat was IRBM's successful development of a plan – in collaboration with OKACOM, Sida, and other partners – to move this function out of IRBM into OKACOM itself, as a function of the regional institution rather than of a supporting donor. With continuing financial assistance from Sida, planned to phase out gradually, the new OKACOM Secretariat is expected to be in operation by the fall of 2007. Achieving this progress in less than three years is a significant accomplishment indeed.

3.2.3 Contributing to a Pioneering River Basin Organization (RBO) Workshop

In collaboration with SADC, which has produced a general protocol for river basin management in Southern Africa, and in partnership with GTZ, in 2006 IRBM contributed substantially to organizing and conducting a first workshop bringing together representatives of more than 15 organizations charged with trans-boundary river basin management roles or responsibilities across Southern Africa to begin working toward cross-communication and a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities. This first workshop was a learning experience, but it was a significant first step in a direction that is both promising and in the longer run essential.

3.2.4 Cross-boundary River Basin Management Network-building

One of the most fundamental challenges to integrated river basin management in the Okavango basin is to build contact networks across national boundaries, not only among national governments but particularly among technical counterparts, working toward a much stronger and broader awareness of the basin as an integrative focus for discussion and work.

During its first two years, the project facilitated workshops that brought technicians from Namibia, Angola and Botswana to discuss the stream gauging technologies they use, participate in training modules, and learn new techniques from one another. The training curriculum was created through collaboration between USAID consultants and the national staff of the riparian countries. Using this collaborative approach contributed to the creation of a syllabus that was tailored to the needs of the technicians in the basin. It was appropriate for the bio-physical environment of the Okavango and contained specific information about the equipment and techniques being employed here.

There are many opportunities for high-level technical experts to expand their data analysis or modeling skills, but almost none for technicians to hone their skills. Technicians are often ignored by capacity building projects. They are generally poorly paid employees with limited educational opportunities and without prospects for advancement within their organizations. This training is very valuable because it contributes to the standardization of data collection procedures, improvements of the quality of the data collected, and motivation of the technicians themselves. Traveling to another country for training signals to the technicians the importance attached to their jobs. It builds morale and pride in their craft. And it helps to build understanding and trust in transboundary relationships and problem-solving. Similar efforts to bring local stakeholders and technicians together around natural resource management also appear promising.

Field-based activities to date have been focused in southeastern Angola, where most of the rainfall for the Okavango River Basin is collected. This province, Kuando Kubango, contains Angola's largest block of forested protected areas, linked to ecosystems in Zambia, Namibia, and Botswana via transboundary migration corridors of large mammals. Areas of biological importance are distributed across the three nations of the Basin, forming the heart of a future Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area; and therefore the long-term protection of Angola's forest cover is important for preserving biodiversity in the entire Basin, including the Okavango Delta and beyond.

3.2.5 Significantly Strengthened Relationships with Partners

In a context that has seen an increasing number of players and initiatives over time and, reportedly, some strains between USAID and its partners in the past, the IRBM project has given significant attention to issues of co-ordination, collaboration, and integration. Tangible accomplishments that either demonstrate or foster strengthened relationships can be identified at various levels as highlighted below.

3.2.5.1 Strengthened relationships at the implementation and technical level

The IRBM project has participated in a joint implementation approach together with two major regional projects in the Okavango basin: the Every River Has its People (ERP) project and the Global Environment Facility's Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango Project. A joint implementation matrix bringing together activities of mutual concern was developed as a framework to guide where and how the 3 projects (ERP, GEF, IRBM) should integrate their efforts. This is a significant effort for the attainment of a coordinated implementation mechanism, and it is also noted that this was conducted under OKACOM guidance and serves to facilitate the coordination role of OKACOM as a regional body with a mandate to encourage and facilitate synergy.

3.2.5.2 Strengthened relationships at strategic and basin planning levels

Through dedicated participation and support to OKACOM strategic and basin planning initiatives (OBSC and OKACOM activities), IRBM has nurtured an important relationship with both OKACOM and other players at the highest level, thereby contributing to a platform for integrated participation and planning at a strategic level. The responsiveness of IRBM to emerging strategic needs of OKACOM is a foundation-stone for this relationship. An attempt to strengthen relationships with other River Basin Organisations (RBOs) at the SADC level through involvement in the planning and financing of the first-ever workshop on support to RBOs in the SADC region is an added component that has a potential to create special synergies and relationships with both SADC as a regional body, as well as with other RBOs in the SADC

region, some of whom have similar experiences with OKACOM. A strengthened relationship with SADC is good for understanding the nature and goals of the SADC framework, while a strengthened relationship with other RBOs is important for sharing experiences, lessons, and other beneficial processes.

3.2.5.3 Strengthened relationships at the financing and resource level

Jointly planned and coordinated resource allocation and mobilization is one of the important aspects enshrined in the Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2005). IRBM coordination with Sida in supporting the establishment of a permanent secretariat for OKACOM was an important milestone in establishing strengthened financial coordination in the Okavango, and this has established a good model for donor coordination in supporting OKACOM in the future. A similar engagement has been established with UNDP GEF on financing a hydromet sub-component of IRBM, and this is also a good example of strengthened relationships in financing implementation activities. The mutual willingness of these three programs to dedicate time and resources to coordination was essential for the success of collaborative initiatives.

3.3 Issues for the Project

These and other accomplishments are a part of the overall picture of the project's first two years. Another part of the picture is that a number of issues have emerged that deserve attention as the USAID regional environmental program and the IRBM project move forward.

3.3.1 Institutional, Technical and Financial Sustainability

One critical issue is how to assure that the initiatives begun under IRBM can be sustained for the longer term.

3.3.1.1 Institutional sustainability

The achievements of the IRBM project to date, as well as the milestones attained in relation to OKACOM, depend on sustainable institutional frameworks. This implies strong and strategic institutional structures that allow for easy institutionalization of processes in the basin and continuity in that regard. In sustaining the strengthened relationships that IRBM and other initiatives have fostered in the Okavango basin, there are 3 major elements limiting efficiency and effectiveness: i) strategic structures that support basin processes within the riparian countries, ii) strategies and mechanisms for institutional renewal, and iii) a qualified human resource base. These remain key challenges for sustaining the institutional framework and for maintaining an enabling institutional environment

3.3.1.2 Technical sustainability

Another aspect of sustainability relates to technical capacity and technical systems in the basin: e.g., data collection and its maintenance. Long term technical competence is required as well as mechanisms for ensuring ownership, institutionalization, and maintenance of technical processes within the riparian countries and especially within OKACOM as the basin custodian. This challenge is tied to institutional renewal and a qualified human resource base at the technical level. Technical sustainability is important given its potential to negate the benefits of current technical efforts in the future. It is noted that technical sustainability is closely related to processes that generate data and information such as regional research and dialogue, both of which merit further attention in the Okavango at present.

3.3.1.3 Financial sustainability

The aspects of ownership, institutionalization, and sustenance of river basin processes in the Okavango, which are critical, need to be tied to a financing framework that involves the riparian countries both at planning and resourcing levels. Although there has been dialogue and general agreement that the riparian countries will need to contribute towards OKACOM in the future, the absence of a clear strategy and framework for *how*, as well as *what*, this will entail has the

potential to negate the good efforts of IRBM as it impacts on both technical and institutional sustainability. This also could have a limiting effect on donor strategies on future support to the Okavango. The mechanism for ensuring future funding from riparian countries does not (currently) appear to be anchored in any binding instruments, nor the commitment; a close look at plausible possibilities is needed.

3.3.2 Certain Differences between the Priorities of USAID and Those of Regional Partners

As it has evolved as a partnership between USAID, OKACOM, and the three countries that share the Okavango River basin, the project has found that the priorities of USAID as a U.S. government agency and those of the riparian parties in the region are not always identical, at least in a sense of relative emphasis. A major driver for USAID funding for IRBM is U.S. stakeholder interest in managing the basin to conserve biodiversity. Another essential criterion for continued USAID/Southern Africa funding is to show that activities are truly regional. On the other hand, as USAID negotiates program design and implementation agreements with its partners, it has found that biodiversity protection is currently a high priority for only one of the three countries (Botswana) and that national partners are interested in seeing national benefits as well as regional benefits. Neither of these examples of differing priorities is an insurmountable problem for USAID regional environmental program development in the longer run, but they have sometimes added complexity to project development and management in the initial years.

The three riparian countries have very different interests in the management of the basin. Most of the water flowing in the Okavango River comes from rainfall in Angola; both Namibia and Botswana are very arid countries. Botswana would like to preserve the timing and levels of natural river flow into the delta and is concerned with the maintenance of the as yet poorly understood sediment load carried by the river into the delta. Namibia may want to extract some water for the central area of Namibia and for irrigation within the basin. Angola has expressed interest in establishing regional river basin planning and management authorities. As the upstream riparians, the river is available to Angola independent of Namibia and Botswana, and the development of Kuando Kubango Province has been delayed due to the recently ended war in Angola. A dialogue about benefit sharing among the three countries – as a *regional* issue

beyond dividing the total of donor support between three countries – has been initiated, but experience in many parts of the world suggests that considerable time may be required to move toward formal agreements.

3.3.3 Uncertainties about Future Roles and Activities of GEF

Establishment of a large GEF project expected to develop a strategic action plan for integrated river basin planning for the Okavango River basin was suspended by GEF following an evaluation of project start-up. This project is potentially such a large part of the multi-donor role in the basin that it is difficult to plan the activities of either OKACOM or other donors without knowing what is to be supported, when, and how. As of the time of the assessment, OKACOM had no information about what to expect and no clear channels of communication with GEF to get some sense of what is likely to happen. Resolving this uncertainty, hopefully by moving ahead with the assistance that GEF had earlier explored, is a very high priority.

3.3.4 Enhancing the Relationship with SADC

Supporting SADC has become a U.S. government foreign policy objective, and as one expression of this commitment IRBM has received funding for SADC programs related to shared river basins. SADC's Water Division, however, has very limited capacity for any operational functions; and it appears that the best use of USAID support would be to pursue joint agreements that USAID funding be focused on well-defined products that add to services delivered by SADC rather than to expanding the capacity of the Water Division per se.

3.3.5 Improving IRBM-related Communications with Angolan Partners through Increased Bilingualism

Although many of IRBM's Angolan partners have a working knowledge of English, they are reluctant to make decisions based on their reading of documents written in English. English, of course, is the language of Namibian and Botswana governments. Over the past two years, there have been occasions when the translation into Portuguese of documents drafted in English has

been delayed. It is appreciated that there may sometimes be unavoidable constraints that force delays in the translation of documents; nevertheless, when this is the case it is recommended that the release of the English version be delayed to coincide with the release of the Portuguese version. This will allow the Angolan partners the same length of time to consider their response to the documents as is afforded the Namibians and Botswana. And it will avoid the unintended appearance that the Portuguese language is of secondary importance.

4. RECOMMENDED PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM, 2007-2008.

In general, we recommend that the Mission emphasize continuity and transition rather than radical change. IRBM should work from its strengths to realize full value from early-year investments in institutional capacity and relationship building to move toward somewhat greater focus on selected areas for technical assistance that are likely to be featured in the longer run. More specific recommendations are the following.

4.1 Assure Smooth and Effective Transfer of the Secretariat Responsibility to OKACOM

No other challenge is more important to the future of integrated river basin management for the Okavango than assuring that the new OKACOM Secretariat is successful. Although this is a joint responsibility among a number of partners, most notably Sida which will assume the majority of the funding responsibility, USAID and IRBM will have a particular opportunity to contribute over the next year or two because of their involvement in the Interim Secretariat. The Secretariat's new Executive Secretary will need a wide range of assistance in the early months, and in the longer run the Secretariat will need technical backstopping as it confronts such issues as developing a financing strategy, translating key documents, and facilitating special OKACOM administrative requirements.

4.2 Assist OKACOM in Assuring a Structure for Technical Oversight and Assistance Functions

It is clear that the Secretariat will provide essential administrative functions for OKACOM, but many of OKACOM's important functions will be technical: e.g., hydrology, ecology, and data base management. This suggests a need for technical staff capabilities within OKACOM, or structurally related to OKACOM, in order to meet technical requirements for decision-making. OBSC may play some of these roles, and some current initiatives suggest that OBSC could in fact be the main vehicle for providing technical support. In any event, along with the emergence of the Secretariat as OKACOM's administrative staff, OKACOM may need assistance in evolving a structure for technical staffing as well. Assisting OKACOM in determining how to meet this need and in developing a structure for it is a priority for the next two years.

4.3 Increase the Focus on Assisting OKACOM with the Longer-term Priorities Suggested Below

As IRBM assists OKACOM over the next two years, the project should increase its focus on technical assistance in the areas suggested in part 5 below, not as a radical change in direction – since most of these topical areas are already included within the scope of IRBM support – but as a steady evolution that will show a change in the relative allocation of effort by the end of the current project.

4.4 Take Appropriate Steps in Relationship with SADC and, as Possible, GEF

Although IRBM has developed a history of positive collaborations with SADC, the allocation of additional USG funding specifically to support activities with SADC's Water Division opens up new questions and opportunities. SADC's Protocol on Shared Watercourses is an important step for the region, but its current institutional capacities are limited. In order to realize as much benefit as possible from the new USG funding, we recommend that USAID seek joint agreements with SADC to target USAID contributions on defined products that contribute to services provided by the SADC water division rather than on internal institutional needs of the division itself.

Likely relationships between Okavango Basin activities of USAID and the potentially very large commitment of funding and effort by GEF remain murky. One possible contribution by USAID and USG could be to assist OKACOM and other partners in determining what can be expected from GEF, when, and under what conditions and also to assist with interfaces between the GEF effort and OKACOM.

5. ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR A SUBSEQUENT USAID REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM, POST-2008.

5.1 Considering Alternative Possible Futures

This is a time of change for USAID, both in its policies and procedures for managing development assistance and in its thinking about regional programs; and the upcoming 2008 national election in the U.S. adds further uncertainties about agency practices and emphases in coming years. Obviously, this evaluation team cannot predict the future, but we suggest that the Mission and its partners think about the longer term as being surrounded by considerable uncertainties. One strategy is to develop robust general strategic directions that can be followed at any of several levels of support and within any of several institutional settings, rather than thinking at this particular time about specifics.

In that spirit, realizing a wide range of uncertainties and possibilities of relatively limited funding, we suggest a combination of:

(a) A continued focus on the Okavango River Basin (a very salient case where interactions between development and environmental objectives could threaten regional stability in the longer term). It is significant that the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, in discussing urgent needs to strengthen adaptive capacities in Africa to reduce vulnerabilities to climate change, mentions water resource management as the example and cites two major river basins (the Nile and the *Okavango*) and two inland lakes (Victoria and Tanganyika). This indicates quite clearly how important the Okavango case is viewed from global and continental perspectives.

(b) Utilization of lessons learned from this case to strengthen regional stability in other river basins in Southern Africa. From a continuing focus on the Okavango, USAID can extend its contributions to river basin-related regional security in Southern Africa by working outward from a solid foundation in this vitally important base.

Possible relationships between these activities and USAID's new Foreign Assistance Framework are summarized in Appendix D.

5.2 A Focus on Strengthening OKACOM's Roles in Establishing Sustainable Regional Institutions for Future Water Resource Management and Transboundary Cooperation

A focus on effective transboundary communication and cooperation to avoid or mitigate possibilities for conflict is in line with shared policy goals emphasizing regional stability, and it is consistent with OKACOM's purposes and intentions. For this focus, program and project priorities should consider the following kinds of assistance, all of which are appropriate to USAID's missions and technical expertise. Activities would be refined by examining strategies, program plans, and project initiatives of other multilateral development assistance organization such as SIDA, GTZ, GEF, and SADC. In a sense, USAID would consider a menu of activities and contributions related to these topics, in close consultation with OKACOM, and pass that menu through a filter that considers priorities and activities of other donors – basing the program plan on technical subject areas not otherwise adequately covered and assuring broad coordination among the partners in order to develop a coherent collection of related activities in the basin.

5.2.1 Extending Capacity-building to Technical Counterparts in Regional River Basin Management

In all three riparian countries there is a need for capacity building, not only administrative capacity building for OKACOM but also technical capacity. In fact, institutional capacity depends heavily on individual technical capacity. In the Okavango basin, ongoing retirements of well trained senior staff, the allure of higher paying private sector jobs depleting the more junior ranks of the relevant organizations, and personnel shortages left in the wake of the war in Angola all contribute to current – and growing – capacity deficits. This need for capacity building was

clearly articulated by most of the stakeholders we interviewed. There are needs at all levels and in all organizations – public, private, and nongovernmental – often transcending the practice of sending some individuals to standardized training course. Examples include water resource management, natural resource management, and data analysis and modeling, along with strategic planning, financial management, and public administration.

5.2.2 Increasing Capacities for Regional Communication, Cooperation, and Conflict Avoidance

In order to maintain regional stability in the face of possible tensions between development and environmental objectives in the longer term, it is important to increase capacities of OKACOM to resolve possible conflicts related to water resource management in the basin. This could include involvement of representatives of the three countries in simulation-based role-playing approaches to considering issues in different national interests related to possible courses of action, the development of plans and structures to be used in the event that differences of opinion arise, and improvements in data and analysis infrastructures for assessing impacts of possible actions (such as effects of up-river water withdrawals or sediment diversions of particular levels on biodiversity in the delta).

5.2.3 Improving Data for Regional Water Management and Biodiversity Protection Decision Support

Effective decision making for integrated river basin management and biodiversity protection in the Okavango depends on the availability of good data and the capacity to analyze the data to answer policy questions. Related needs include increasing access to existing records and improving capacities to monitor current and future conditions, along with associated technical training.

For example, efforts to re-establish a complete gauging network in Angola and elsewhere in the basin and to develop a sustainable data collection system should be pursued. In Angola, there is also a need for more analysis of the tree species, an improved understanding of the biodiversity of the basin in general, and an assessment of the extent and types of uses made by local

communities of resources found in Kuando Kubango. The use of remote sensing, particularly satellite imagery, should be developed (remote sensing is particularly useful in a context where travel is difficult and expensive). Selective ground-truthing coupled with intelligent analyses will support the upscaling of knowledge of distributed phenomena at a reasonable cost. This knowledge will improve a basin scale understanding of the Okavango in ways that will be highly useful to decision-makers in considering possible threats to regional stability. Efforts should be made to ease remaining sensitivities about the use and sharing of imagery; the benefits of using these techniques far outweigh the perceived risks.

5.2.4 *Developing Effective Regional Collaboration at a Provincial Scale in the Okavango Basin*

OKACOM, the OBSC, and the Secretariat are necessary for high-level management of the basin, because decisions about water and benefit sharing will be taken at this level. The work of the ERP and IRBM to promote the improvements in the lives of community members and develop effective civil society at local levels are also vital to the management of the basin, and there is a need to improve communication among these groups. As such, National Coordinating Units (NCU) are being set up in each country, and support for these institutions to facilitate participation and dialogue between the residents of the basin and the commission would be very useful. Inasmuch as the basin is remote from the capital of each country (Figure 1), each NCU will require a presence or focal point in the basin. Trust and understanding among the three NCU focal



points, linked with basin residents in all three countries, is essential to a willingness to work in concert for mutual benefit. Communication among the basin NCU focal points across national boundaries, as well as communication between the basin and the riparian country's capitals, should be encouraged and facilitated.

The value of a provincial-scale approach to trans-boundary river basin management, along with a national-scale approach, illustrates a more general point: that effective management, rooted in a sense of shared benefits and responsibilities, requires attention to roles and views at multiple geographical scales, in some cases including local scales (where, for example, many day-to-day judgments about how to integrate development considerations with environmental considerations are made: (see box). Without local-support for basin-wide management policies, the success of those policies is likely to be at risk.

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5.2.5 *Establishment of a Basin/Regional Capacity for Water Management and Biodiversity Research*

An improved capacity for collecting and assembling data from the Okavango basin requires one further step in order to be useful for decision-making: analysis and modeling to connect the facts with policy questions and issues. For the longer term, this implies a need for a regional research capacity as well as a regional data system capacity. One option within the basin could be the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Center (HOORC), located in Maun and administered by the University of Botswana, which is an internationally known center for research on biodiversity conservation in the Okavango Delta, although its research would have to be substantially expanded and its linkages with Angola and Namibia substantially strengthened. If this strategy is not practicable, OKACOM and its partners should consider alternatives in order to meet a need for research to support decision-making, while at the same time meeting many needs for technical capacity-building.

TOWARD A MULTI-SCALE APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE BASIN

Recent studies of environmental policy decision-making and implementation provide strong support for an argument that involving both top-down and bottom-up elements, working at a range of geographic scales, is much more likely to be successful than working at a single scale.

As a part of the international Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, completed in 2004, a regional study was conducted for Southern Africa, including three scales of attention and stakeholder involvement (*Nature Supporting People: The Southern Africa Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, Pretoria: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 2004): Africa south of the equator, the Gariiep and Zambezi Basins, and a number of localities in those basins. The success of this project in combining different process understandings and stakeholder views at the three scales could contribute to strategies for incorporating local-scale components in integrated river basin management programs in the Okavango in the longer run.

5.2.6 *Enhancing Stakeholder Participation in “Shared Water Management”*

Development assistance agencies are increasingly committed to promoting, facilitating, and assisting stakeholder participation. USAID’s commitment is based on a more general set of

policies of the U.S. government that emphasize (and often require) participative decision-making. SADC has included stakeholder participation as an element of its protocol, and the community participation aspect of IRBM implies a similar interest on the part of OKACOM. This could be an objective where, without requiring large allocations of funding, USAID could have a significant positive impact on the “culture” of participative policy and decision-making for river basin management and natural resource management in the basin.

5.3 Assisting OKACOM in Transferring Lessons Learned from its Experience with Integrated River Basin Management to Other Major River Basins in Southern Africa

The second focus is intended to utilize learnings from the Okavango basin case about river basin management, biodiversity protection, and related institution-building to support regional stability more generally in Southern Africa. We suggest two initiatives as starting-points.

5.3.1 Strengthening Relationships between OKACOM and ORASECOM as a Prototype for Cross-Basin Regional Institutional Strengthening

Given limited resources, it makes sense to strengthen relationships between OKACOM and other river basin organizations by starting with one prototype. We suggest that ORASECOM is the most attractive alternative. The two basins are relatively similar in their stage of institutional development and the scope of their trans-boundary issues. It would be productive to explore selected interlinkages between the two RBOs, including such possibilities of staff exchanges and secondment, perhaps beginning with visits and shared workshops that facilitate the development of personal relationships and the sharing of information and knowledge. Case studies and best practices from their two experiences could be published to assist other basins in the work of establishing their commissions and managing their water resources.

5.3.2 Organizing and Conducting Annual River Basin Organization (RBO) Meetings as a Focus for Sharing Lessons Learned

Support to River Basin Organizations is a clear priority within SADC. This priority would benefit significantly from a framework within which lessons and experiences can be shared among RBOs, in the context of strengthening relationships with SADC. The first RBO meeting (section 3.1.1.3) was a demonstration of one approach to meet this need; and it should be followed by further such meetings, where the purposes and agendas of such meetings are refined through practice to become ever more useful. USAID support could include both assisting in meeting organization and design and, at least equally important, assisting with follow-ups with SADC, where conclusions or recommendations emerging from a meeting are institutionalized in policy and practice.

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Addendum: USAID distributed and posted the draft evaluation report in April, inviting comments from all interested parties. Comments from USAID reviewers were incorporated in a separate USAID summary and plan for implementing evaluation recommendations (see separate document). The only other comments received were informal, and consistently supportive of the program to date, and of the recommendations of the evaluation team both for the near term and longer term. –Chris Schaan, USAID

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Appendices

- A. Evaluation Statement of Work**
- B. Evaluation Schedule and Activities**
- C. Responses to Key Evaluation Questions**
- D. Relationships between Recommended Activities and USAID’s Foreign Assistance Framework**
- E. Individuals Consulted**
- F. USAID Observations and Response to Evaluation Questions**

APPENDIX A. STATEMENT OF WORK

DRAFT

Mid-Term, Programmatic Evaluation of USAID/Southern Africa's Program to "Improve Management of Shared River Basins" 27 December 2006

Scope of Work

I. Summary

Following two years of implementation under a new regional strategy for the environment sector focused on river basins and considering recent changes in the framework for U.S. foreign assistance, USAID wishes to conduct a participatory, programmatic evaluation process, to be completed by May 2007, to: (a) recommend actions to optimize the allocation of USAID resources toward achieving regional foreign assistance objectives under the ongoing program in the near term (2007-2008) and (b) identify activities appropriate for a follow-on regional USAID program to begin on or about September, 2008.

II. Background

USAID/Southern Africa addresses trans-boundary water and biodiversity management issues under an over-arching agreement signed with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in 2006 and working in close collaboration with the multi-national Permanent Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM) under the program that was designed and approved in 2004. All activities under this program are implemented by a contractor through the Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project. At present, the contractor is ARD Inc., a.k.a. the implementing mechanism.

A contract to support project activities was signed Sept 28, 2004, and field work began in November. The project is funded by USAID Southern Africa with approximately \$7.3 million (as of Dec. 2006) over the four year period. It is to be completed by September 30, 2008.

The project is coordinated by the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) and its technical advisory committee, the Okavango Basin Steering Committee (OBSC). It is implemented in coordination with other donors supporting regional activities in the basin, particularly the Sida (Every River Project-ERP and OKACOM strengthening) and UNDP-GEF (Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango-EPSMO) initiatives.

Project *inputs* include logistical support, training, equipment and technical assistance to institutions and communities involved in the management and protection of river basin resources. *Outputs* include improved information and training that strengthens institutional and

technical capacity for Okavango River Basin management in Angola, Namibia and Botswana. Expected *results* include strengthened institutions providing more effective services in support of regional river basin planning. And the desired *impacts* include biodiversity protection, conflict mitigation, and more efficient use of natural resources in support of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. The activities in the Okavango are designed to serve as a model for other river basins in the region where shared water, biodiversity and other natural resources are a concern.

Additional activities with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) were established under a 2006 agreement to support mutual objectives including the sharing of best practices, data procurement and management for decision making, and conflict mitigation at a broader scale.

The Program's stated purpose is to "strengthen regional capacity to address trans-boundary water resource management issues and build consensus on allocation that supports sustainable development while protecting biodiversity." Project components include:

- Strengthening regional (SADC, River Basin Organization-RBO, and related organizations) capacity for dialogue, collaboration and conflict mitigation
- Strengthening the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM)
- Community participation in natural resource governance and biodiversity protection
- Data and information management to improve policy, legal, planning, and management decisions

Planned Results (summarized, from the Performance Management Plan)¹:

- Biologically important areas identified for improved management
- Mechanisms for regional dialogue and collaboration in place (for selected RBOs)
- Potential conflicts over shared water resources avoided or mitigated
- Tools, procedures and human capacity in place for improved basin-wide planning and management
- Projects that address basin-wide environmental threats and improve welfare implemented.
- Secretariat for OKACOM established and providing effective regional services
- Biodiversity and ecological services in the Okavango Basin conserved

The project, through SADC and OKACOM, also collaborates with government ministries, active non-governmental organizations in the basin, communities, regional academic and research institutions, and businesses and local government institutions that use and manage the resources in the Okavango River Basin within Angola, Botswana, and Namibia.

¹ Three important documents describe expected results and indicators – listed in order of precedence: (1) The new Operational Plan and standard indicators – in the future, foreign assistance programs will be asked to measure and report on results based on standard indicators provided by USAID for use on a global scale. (2) The approved USAID Performance Management Plan (PMP) which describes the results identified for use and monitored by USAID up to present; and (3) the Project Monitoring Plan, which the contractor proposed and USAID approved, to measure milestones and results on a broader and more detailed scale than the prior two documents.

III. Evaluation Purpose

- a) Recommend actions to optimize the allocation of USAID resources toward achieving the objectives of the ongoing program in the near term (2007-2008) and
- b) Identify activities most appropriate for a follow-on **regional** USAID program taking the following key Parameters into consideration. Any follow-on activities must have a clear fit in terms of:
 - ✓ a “regional” program definition (see attachment) and
 - ✓ USAID’s new Framework for Foreign Assistance (see <http://www.state.gov/f/direction/>)

IV. Evaluation Scope

The evaluation will focus on assessing progress toward improved management of the Okavango river basin, with emphasis on institutional strengthening and biodiversity conservation. As next steps are considered, particularly in light of the new U.S. Framework for Foreign Assistance, the benefits from maintaining continuity of existing initiatives need to be assessed and compared with other opportunities or approaches that could be more effective in achieving foreign assistance objectives for water management and biodiversity conservation from a regional platform. For the ongoing program, the evaluation will assess what will be required to achieve existing strategic goals and results, to the degree that they are still valid and appropriate for a USAID regional program. Any new activities will need to be justified within the constraints of expected future funding levels, USG policies, regional needs and priorities, while taking into consideration the plans and ongoing efforts of other international partners in related programs.

The evaluation team will review available USAID documents including the original strategy, ARD contract as amended, Performance Monitoring Plans (new standard indicators, USAID PMP and Project-level plans), annual and strategic work plans, semi-annual and annual progress reports, financial reports, USAID Annual Reports for 2005 and 2006, the Operational Plan for 2007-08, and other related assessments. An attached list of materials includes documents that are recommended for all team members to be familiar with, as well as other references that only some members may need to review to accomplish their scope of work.

The evaluation team should review documents prior to field work to become familiar with project goals, actors, issues and relationships. The team will then conduct structured and unstructured interviews, site visits, and further analysis of documentation, in order to answer the evaluation questions and make recommendations for future adjustments in the program. Field visits are planned in Angola, Botswana and Namibia at a minimum, with particular emphasis on direct recipients of assistance (OKACOM, persons trained, entities receiving equipment, TA or other inputs). Interviews and financial reports by primary components from USAID’s implementing partner will assist in assessing costs versus benefits of the primary program interventions.

All visits and interviews should be planned in advance and designed to respond to the terms of this SOW to enhance findings and recommendations.

A separate document describes proposed team members and roles. The estimated LOE for the team co-leader, Mark Andreini, is 20 days; for the remaining team members, between 8-14 days LOE each.

V. Key Evaluation Questions

2.1.a Are the original design assumptions and the logic of the SO framework still valid? Should they change to better reflect the existing circumstances in the region and USAID's new framework? If so, how?

2.1.b Are clear and appropriate targets established for each metric category – process, inputs, outputs and results (see Sec. VIII below for specific sets of sub-queries)? Should targets be adjusted? If so, how? What progress is evident toward the established targets in each category? Is the project likely to meet valid targets by its completion date in September, 2008?

2.2. What approaches and interventions that have been most effective in supporting achievement of the objective and planned results (see Sec. II)?

2.3. Specifically, how have project activities impacted OKACOM and related organizations that affect river basin management? What changes are evident? What has been most effective in producing these changes? What realistic options and strategies could be pursued to enhance sustainability, and to institutionalize regional “benefits sharing” or payments for ecosystem services?

2.4. Are any other noteworthy impacts (beyond the stated objective and planned results) evident?

2.5. Could a different mix of activities, or a different approach, contribute more effectively or more efficiently to achieve the objective? How could future activities be adjusted to improve program performance, as defined in the approved USAID PMP?

2.6. What are the comparative advantages of USAID as a regional cooperating partner in this sector? How do stakeholders perceive USAID's activities in the sectors of regional water (shared river basin management) and biodiversity conservation?

2.7. What specific adjustments, if any, are recommended for the ongoing program within the next 18 months?

2.8. Looking to the future, what are the top priorities and gaps in assistance that are especially suited to regional interventions and USAID as a donor, for (i) improved management of shared

river basins (ii) biodiversity conservation within the framework of river basin management and (iii) implementation of related SADC protocols?

2.9. What is recommended for a follow-on program? What inputs and outputs should be targeted? What approach should be used? What mix of implementing partner(s) and institutional mechanisms would be most effective?

2.10. Given the findings and recommendations from preceding questions, how can the transition from the present project to the recommended follow-on phase best be completed?

[Note: USAID may modify or add points to consider, based on stakeholder inputs to this draft SOW and evolving guidance from Washington regarding the new Foreign Assistance Framework and the role for regional platforms.]

VI. Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach shall reflect USAID development principles to the greatest degree possible, within the constraints of time and funding. Relevant principles include: (a) ownership—promote local stakeholder participation throughout the process; (b) capacity-building—involve local institutions in a manner that transfers technical skills; (c) sustainability and selectivity—identify approaches that produce enduring impacts; (d) partnerships—insure close collaboration with implementing partners, USAID Missions, other donors and stakeholders; and (e) results—focus limited resources to achieve clearly defined, measurable and strategic results². To this effect, USAID/Southern Africa developed the evaluation scope in a consultative process, inviting input from the Mission’s partners and customers – especially OKACOM, SADC, bilateral Missions and embassies in Angola, Namibia and Botswana, and ARD Inc. The evaluation team will work in a manner that continues to reinforce a transparent and consultative approach.

Integrating technical assistance with local ownership and capacity-building are fundamental to support USAID’s core goal for “transformational development.”³ Therefore, broad stakeholder input should be sought to help identify opportunities to better achieve results and adapt USAID program activities to changing circumstances in the region.

VII. Coordination with Other Cooperating Partners and Stakeholders

Future opportunities, and identifying an appropriate regional niche that optimizes impacts and results from USAID/Southern Africa interventions, will depend in great part on how well USAID’s efforts mesh and complement those of other cooperating partners. Other cooperating

² USAID Principles of Development and Reconstruction Assistance, from USAID Policy home page, http://www.usaid.gov/policy/2005_nineprinciples.html (PPC, 2005). However, these may be revised under the new framework for foreign assistance (see below).

³ USAID’s Policy Framework for Bilateral Foreign AID promotes transformational development as a core goal and defines it as: changes in governance and institutions, human capacity, and economic structure that help countries sustain progress while reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, ensuring environmental sustainability, and achieving other Millennium Development Goals on a lasting basis. http://www.usaid.gov/policy/policy_framework_jan06.pdf

partners and stakeholders to be consulted include USAID Missions and Embassies within the scope of the program, and other donors with basin-wide initiatives such as the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango River Basin Project (EPSMO) financed by the UNDP-Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF), the Every River Has Its People Project (ERP) supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and IUCN's regional programs related to biodiversity and water. USAID central offices for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT), the U.S. Forestry Service, and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation should also be consulted.

This evaluation could coincide with the next planned OKACOM meeting or a SADC- WSRG meeting. Since such meetings are relatively rare, if possible, team plans should be adjusted to allow for interaction with these stakeholders, such as presentations of preliminary evaluation findings and conclusions.

VIII. Analytical Approach

An analytical approach to evaluation used by the National Research Council⁴ includes assessment against four categories of metrics. A clear statement of targets in terms of these four metrics is required for successful program monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation team will determine the degree to which targets for these metrics are reflected in program documentation, as well as the progress achieved to date toward them. In each case, the evaluation will consider if and how future activities should be adjusted to improve performance in consideration of these metrics. Analysis using these metrics will assist the evaluation team to articulate and categorize specific program elements for future improvement or for follow-on efforts. The four metric categories are:

- Process Metrics (measure a course of action taken to achieve a goal)
- Input Metrics (measure tangible quantities put into a process to achieve a goal)
- Output Metrics (measure the products and services delivered)
- Results/Outcome Metrics (measure results that stem from use of the outputs and influence stakeholders outside the program)

Each is described in terms of specific measures below (adapted from NRC⁵)

Process Metrics:

1. Project leadership with sufficient authority to allocate resources, direct project interventions and facilitate progress toward goals.
2. A multi-year plan that includes goals, focused statement of tasks, and implementation plans that integrate inputs, outputs and results.
3. A functioning peer review process involving all appropriate stakeholders in place (a) with documentation of proposed processes and timetables (b) participation in periodic

⁴ Thinking Strategically: The Appropriate Use of Metrics for the Climate Change Science Program. Committee on Metrics for Global Change Research, Climate Research Committee, National Research Council (2005); National Academies Press, 500 Fifth Street, N.W., Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055; Internet <http://www.nap.edu>

⁵ Ibid.

assessments of progress toward achieving program goals, and (c) an ability to revisit the plan in light of new information, changing circumstances and input from stakeholders.

4. A strategy for setting priorities and allocating resources among different elements of the program (including those that cross components) and advancing the most promising avenues to achieve results.
5. Procedures in place to facilitate the use and understanding of outputs and results by others, and to promote lasting partnerships.

Input Metrics (measure tangible quantities put into a process to achieve a goal)

1. Sufficient and appropriate personnel (number and types) to achieve the results.
2. Sufficient commitment of other resources (infrastructure, financial, equipment, logistical support) to allow the planned program to be carried out.
3. Geographic allocation of resources appropriate to implement plans and maximize outputs and results.
4. Sufficient resources to promote the development of sustainability through: (a) human capital; (b) data collection, measurement and interpretation systems; (c) transition to permanent institutional homes; and (d) services that build constituencies and enable the use of data by relevant stakeholders.
5. The program takes advantage of existing resources (e.g., does not duplicate other related projects, builds on past experiences, applies available studies and data; takes advantage of existing organizations, operating modes, infrastructure...)

Output Metrics (measure the products and services delivered)

1. The program produces broadly accessible results, such as (a) data and information, (b) lessons learned, (c) new and applicable measurement techniques, (d) decision support tools, and (e) well-described relationships that improve common understanding of processes and/or enable forecasting.
2. Training activities reached the right people, and provided the right skills, to effectively further performance in achieving results.
3. Adequate institutional arrangements were identified and strengthened to support continuation of relevant activities.
4. Appropriate stakeholders see value in the services provided; outputs are considered useful to inform future management and policy decisions.
5. Results are communicated to an appropriate range of stakeholders.

Results Metrics (measure results that stem from use of the outputs and/or influence stakeholders beyond direct recipients of the program). These are based on the “results” documented in the project’s Performance Monitoring Plan (see the PMP for numerical targets that were established for most of these measures):

1. Biologically important areas identified for improved management
2. Mechanisms for regional dialogue and collaboration in place (for the Okavango Basin)
3. Potential conflicts over shared water resources avoided or mitigated

4. Tools, procedures and human capacity in place for improved basin-wide planning and management
5. Projects that address basin-wide environmental threats and improve welfare implemented or are underway
6. OKACOM is operational and providing effective regional services
7. Biodiversity and ecological services in the Okavango Basin being conserved
8. Institutions and human capacity strengthened to better address river basin management issues.
9. Results being applied and having the desired impact on regional, national and local planning and development activities. Specifically, results being used (a) to mitigate conflicts, (b) alleviate poverty, and (c) support decision making and analysis that improves allocation of water and conservation of ecosystem services.⁶

IX. Data Requirements and Sources

USAID is assembling a list of documents to be made available to the evaluation team. The team will have access to USAID project files, including the original strategy, the implementing partner contract (as amended), Performance Monitoring Plans (both USAID and IRBM Project), reporting plans, annual and strategic work plans, semi-annual and annual progress reports, consultant reports, financial reports, and recent evaluations and assessments of related projects. The evaluation will review plans, progress reports, and other data sources, including field verification, to compare status with targets and indicators. The team should be familiar with recent USAID policy directives and definitions (especially those related to the new foreign assistance framework, its standard performance measures, and what is “regional”) and other relevant documentation. Inputs from existing stakeholders (especially OKACOM, parties trained, and parties involved in the project kick-off workshop) and other cooperating partners working in the sector will be obtained via interviews, field visits, and correspondence. The SADC Water Division, Water Sector Reference Group (WSRG) and SADC biodiversity protocol coordinator will be consulted during the evaluation process.

X. Mechanisms for stakeholder input and levels of participation

- 1) Evaluation Team Members: Include regional representatives from USAID and another donor. The team will review documents, conduct interviews and site visits, complete the assigned SOW, present draft findings and reports.
- 2) Evaluation Oversight Committee: These are key contacts for team members. The oversight committee will review and comment on the evaluation SOW and preliminary draft reports prior to releasing them for public comments. The Oversight Committee will

⁶ Given the recent initiation of the program (two-years ago), it is too early to assess “impact metrics” (that measure the long-term societal, economic, or environmental consequences of an outcome) – However, in terms of follow-on plans and future design, it is important to keep impact metrics in mind. In the future, such impact metrics could include: (a) results of the program have informed policy and improved decisions; (b) results benefited society in terms of enhancing economic vitality, promoting environmental stewardship, protecting life and property; (c) public understanding of integrated water resource management, conservation of ecosystem services and biodiversity has increased. It may take decades to fully assess substantial contributions from a regional program such as this that focuses on institutional strengthening at the levels of SADC and RBOs.

be chaired by USAID project manager (Schaan) and will receive progress reports, offer suggestions to resolve issues encountered during the process, and guide evaluation process to successful completion.

- 3) Expanded team and collaborating partners (OKACOM, SADC) and stakeholders: Open invitation to review and comment on draft outputs. These are interested parties who will receive direct mailings of the draft documents for public comment.
- 4) Other interested stakeholders: Suggestions are welcomed throughout the process described here to improve program results and achieve evaluation goals. IRBM stakeholder list and newsletter will direct people to webpage as draft documents are released for comment. At any time, interested parties may send comments to klinekl@ornl.gov and/or cschaan@usaid.gov

Public communication tool: Draft and final documents (SOW, progress and evaluation reports) will be shared on the USAID/Southern Africa web page to facilitate opportunities for review and comment: <http://rca.usaid.gov>

XI. Evaluation Team, Roles, Schedule, Budget (see separate documents)

APPENDIX B. EVALUATION SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

October 2006 – January 2007: Evaluation planning, suggestions and comments collected from partners, other donors and stakeholders on draft scope of work; review and approval of final scope

January – February 2007: Planning by evaluation team, coordination regarding schedules, appointments for visits arranged

February 28, 2007: Attend OBSC task force meeting, Pretoria

February 28 – March 3, 2007: Field visit and meetings, Namibia

March 4 – March 9, 2007: Field visit and meetings, Angola

March 10, 2007: Meeting of team with McCormick/ARD in Johannesburg

March 11, 2007: Full team meeting in Gaborone

March 12: Meeting with USAID/Southern Africa

March 12 – 14: Meetings in Botswana

March 15: Debrief and presentation of draft findings at USAID

March 16: Report writing

March 17: Team departure from Botswana

March 19: Draft evaluation report submitted to USAID

May 3: Revised draft evaluation report submitted to USAID

APPENDIX C. KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS (Team Response)

In Section V, the Statement of Work for this evaluation activity listed ten key evaluation questions. In general, the list of questions anticipated a more detailed formal project evaluation than was possible with the limited time and resources allocated. As a result, in many cases, the team is unable to provide the kinds of specific answers that seem to be requested, because we believe that our knowledge of the details of the project is insufficient to support knowledgeable responses. Here are our general answers to the questions:

1.a *Are the original design assumptions and the logic of the SO framework still valid? Should they change to better reflect the existing circumstances in the region and USAID's new framework? If so, how?*

The original problem statement and objectives of SO 17 and other project documents were and remain valid. As the SO framework is reviewed, changes might be appropriate to reflect both the fact that some of the project's responsibilities for OKAKOM are coming to an end, an evolving additional focus on a smaller range of services might be appropriate, and future activities need to be aligned with USAID's new framework (see section 5).

1.b *Are clear and appropriate targets established for each metric category – process, inputs, outputs and results (see Sec. VIII below for specific sets of sub-queries)? Should targets be adjusted? If so, how? What progress is evident toward the established targets in each category? Is the project likely to meet valid targets by its completion date in September, 2008?*

In general, the indicators included in the current SO framework are appropriate, but they tend sometimes to be questionable from an outcome/results-oriented project evaluation perspective. Such statements as “number of organizations engaged” and “number of entities strengthened” are grounded in terms that are open to interpretation and might be reviewed to see if alternatives would be more informative about progress toward project goals. Our general impression is that the project is likely to meet most of its stated targets by its completion date, but we question whether in every case these targets are good measures of project purposes. It is arguable, of

course, that indicators should be framed in such a way that some flexibility is maintained in implementing them through relationships with partners.

2.a *What approaches and interventions have been most effective in supporting achievement of the objective and planned results (see Sec. II)? What has been spent on each component and administration of the project, compared to results from each? What were in-kind contributions from collaborating partners, and how effective has this been?*

We lack information to provide a detailed answer to this question. It is our impression that, responding to requests from regional partners for assistance, especially OKACOM, the primary focus of the project in its first two years was on strengthening OKACOM through taking steps to establish a Secretariat; and results from this effort have been impressive (see 3.2.1.1 above). Measurable progress for other project components – in the sense of tangible development outcomes – was more limited, in part because of demands for time and resources in support of this primary focus but in larger part because the project is only about two years old. Regarding relationships with collaborating partners, see 3.2.1.5. Regarding allocations of funding, partial accounts from ARD indicate that about 60 percent of the funding has been devoted to regional programs (OKACOM). Of the remaining support, about two-thirds has been focused on Angola, with approximately equal support for Botswana and Namibia. About 60 percent of the total funding was for management and technical assistance, cutting across the other categories.

2.b *What has been the distribution of project benefits among participating countries? How has each country and its riparian population gained from the project, training, internship opportunities, etc.?*

See the answer to the previous question. A majority of the effort has been aimed at strengthening OKACOM as a regional institution. Among the three countries that share the Okavango River Basin, a special effort has been made to provide benefits to Angola through community participation element as a step toward demonstrating that a regional approach can mean “shared benefits” for the water-source country as well as water-destination countries.

3. *Specifically, how have project activities impacted OKACOM and related organizations that affect river basin management? What changes are evident? What has been most effective in producing these changes? What realistic options and strategies could be pursued to enhance sustainability, and to institutionalize regional “benefits sharing” or payments for ecosystem services?*

Project activities have been vitally important in establishing a Secretariat for OKACOM and moving that responsibility from an interim status within IRBM toward a functional part of OKACOM (see 3.2.1.2). In general, the approach has been to be a service provider, asking OKACOM and related regional organizations what they need and attempting to respond to those needs. Regarding sustainability, which is a significant challenge, see 3.2.2.1.

4. *Are any other noteworthy impacts (beyond the stated objective and planned results) evident?*

Yes. See 3.2.1. The evaluation team did not have sufficient time and resources to visit some of these activities in the field; but many kinds of intended impacts, such as discernible changes in river basin management or discernible changes in biodiversity protection, do not appear this early in the project’s lifetime (nor were they expected).

5. *Could a different mix of activities, or a different approach, contribute more effectively or more efficiently to achieve the objective? How could future activities be adjusted to improve program performance, as defined in the approved USAID PMP?*

Regarding future activities beyond the current horizon of the implementing agreement in 2008, see section 5. Regarding activities between now and 2008, see section 4, which suggests that the mix of activities be adjusted both to recognize the transfer of the OKACOM Secretariat responsibility and to move toward the emphases suggested for the period beyond 2008.

6. *What are the comparative advantages of USAID as a regional cooperating partner in this sector? How do stakeholders perceive USAID's activities in the sectors of regional water (shared river basin management) and biodiversity conservation?*

In general, the approach of the project and of USAID's program has been to emphasize broad-based collaboration with partners rather than competition based on comparative advantages. In technical roles, most donors have access to the same pool of international expertise; so roles of individual donors depend on the priorities of their sources of funding and their leaderships. It appears that comparative advantages of USAID in the 2004-2006 period have included the presence and availability of the sizeable ARD team, a focus on responding to OKACOM and other regional/national requests for assistance, flexibility as needs and contexts have changed, and an agency interest in biodiversity conservation. Looking to the future, it is possible that the interests of the U.S. government in such objectives as regional stability and such topics as stakeholder participation might be contributions to a multi-donor collaboration that would be different from other donors.

7. *What specific adjustments, if any, are recommended for the ongoing program within the next 18 months?*

Recommended program strategies and actions are summarized in section 4, although we do not believe that we are in a position to be very specific.

8. *Looking to the future, what are the top priorities and gaps in assistance that are especially suited to regional interventions and USAID as a donor, for (i) improved management of shared river basins (ii) biodiversity conservation within the framework of river basin management and (iii) implementation of related SADC protocols?*

Recommendations for the longer term are summarized in section 5, somewhat refocused on different issue statements related to USAID's new Framework for Foreign Assistance.

- 9.** *What is recommended for a follow-on program? What inputs and outputs should be targeted? What approach should be used? What mix of implementing partner(s) and institutional mechanisms would be most effective?*

See Section 5 for general recommendations. We are not in a position to be specific about implementation approaches, which would be grounded in USAID agency policies and implementation mechanisms.

- 10.** *Given the findings and recommendations from preceding questions, how can the transition from the present project to the recommended follow-on phase best be completed?*

See section 4, which suggests that the remaining months of the current project be specifically related to an evolution toward emphases in the subsequent phase.

APPENDIX D. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES AND USAID’S FOREIGN ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK.

We understand that these activities must be related to USAID’s new Foreign Assistance Framework. Based on very limited information provided about the scopes of program elements and sub-elements, we offer ideas in a box below. Note that most sub-elements relate to either or both natural resource and biodiversity management.

Recommendation	USAID Sub-Elements
5.2.1 Technical Capacity Building	8.1.2 Sustainable NRM and Production 8.1.3 Biodiversity Policy and Governance 8.1.5 International Cooperation 8.1.6 Science, Technology, Information
5.2.2 Increase Capacity For Communication, Collaboration, and Conflict Avoidance	8.1.5 International Cooperation
5.2.3 Data For Regional Water and Biodiversity Decision Support	8.1.5 International Cooperation 8.1.6 Science, Technology, Information
5.2.4 Regional Collaboration at a Provincial Scale for Local Planning and Development	8.1.2 Sustainable NRM and Production 8.1.3 Biodiversity Policy and Governance 8.1.5 International Cooperation
5.2.5 Regional Systems For Water And Biodiversity Research And Analysis	8.1.3 Biodiversity Policy and Governance 8.1.5 International Cooperation 8.1.6 Science, Technology, Information
5.2.6 Enhanced Stakeholder Participation In Shared (Water) Resource Management	8.1.2 Sustainable NRM and Production 8.1.5 International Cooperation
5.3.1 Cross Basin Regional Institutional Strengthening: OKACOM, ORASECOM	8.1.5 International Cooperation 8.1.6 Science, Technology, Information
5.3.2 Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned	8.1.5 International Cooperation

APPENDIX E. INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

OBSC committee meeting in Pretoria, 28 February 2007.

Nik Sekhran, Regional Technical Advisor, Biodiversity/International Waters, Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Akiko Yamamoto, Regional Portfolio Manager (International Waters), GEF

Stephan de Wet and Laura Namene, Namibian Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forests

Piet Heynes, Director of Resource Management, Department of Water Affairs, Namibia

Shirley Bethune, IRBM in Namibia, and Barbara Curtis, forestry consultant

Patricia Skyer and Sanath K. Reddy, USAID/Namibia

Anntje Eggers, Hydrologist, Namibia Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forests

Mr. Kahuure, (K) Permanent Secretary, Namibia Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry

W. M. Ndeutapo Amagulu, Permanent Secretary, Namibia Ministry of Veterans Affairs and OKACOM Commissioner

Mwazi Mwasi, Namibia ERP Coordinator

Shirley Bethune, Namibia IRBM Coordinator

Piet Heynes, Under Secretary: Water Affairs and Forestry, Namibia Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry

Cynthia Ortman, Hydrologist, Namibia Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry

Guido Van Langenhove, Head Hydrology Division, Namibia Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry

Jonthan Hodgkins, ARD Senior Technical Advisor, Namibia

Sem T. Shikongo, Deputy Director, Directorate of Environmental Affairs, Namibia Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Quinton Hammond, Chief Technical Assistant, Hydrology, MAWF

Hartmut Krugman, Southern Sustainable Development Corporation, former leader of the GEF Okavango Project

Gita Honwana Welch Angola Country Director, UNDP

Gabriela Nascimento, UNDP

Mr. Manjolo, Vice Governor of Kuando Kubango Province, Angola

Michael Nehrbooss, Deputy General Development Officer, USAID/A

Nervyb Farroe, Program Supervisor, USAID/A

Alonzo Wind, Director, General Development Office, USAID/A

Isidro Pinheiro, Angolan OKACOM Commissioner and OBSC Member.

Carlos Andrade, Member of the OBSC

Paulo Emilio Mendes, Senior Hydrologist, Angola Dept of Water Affairs

Manuel Quintino, Regional Manager of GEF

Gomes de Silva (GdS, Angola)

Vladimir Russo, Head of the Angola National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP)

Soki Kuedikuenda, Director Nacional de Recorses Naturales, Ministerio do Urbanismo e Ambiente

Cristoph Asanzi, Manager for Agriculture and Natural Resources World Vision

John Yale, Director of WV Angola

Mustaque Ahme, Chief of Party, Municipal Development Program, CARE, Angola

Tomas Pedro Caetano, Eengenheiro Florestal, Ministerio da Agricultura e do Desenvolvimento Rural, Instituto de Desenvolvimento Florestal

Anthony Vodraska and others, USAID/Southern Africa

Phera Ramoeli and Luis De Almeida, SADC Water Division

Horst Vogel, GTZ Transboundary Water Management Programme for SADC

Dr. Akolang Tombale, PS, Botswana Ministry of Minerals, Energy, and Water Resources

Gabaake Gabaake, PS, Botswana Ministry of Local Government

Anthony Woods, Regional Environmental Officer, US Department of State, Gaborone

Appendix F. USAID comments and response to “Evaluation Questions”

Note: this Appendix was added by USAID after the external evaluation was complete to reflect USAID Project Management views on key evaluation issues. It was not prepared by, presented by, or shared with the evaluation team.

2.1.a Are original design assumptions and the logic of the SO framework still valid?

-- Not entirely. Some should better reflect the existing circumstances in the region and USAID’s new framework as follows:

- An assumption that remains valid is that a regional USAID Program must work through regional counterpart organizations. Therefore, working with and through SADC in support of regional priorities and implementation of the Protocols that are in place for shared watercourse and wildlife (biodiversity), is an appropriate approach.
- One early assumption was that the most appropriate approach to “improving shared river basin management” is through OKACOM and similar RBOs. While these entities have an important role, it would make more sense to first more precisely define *what* you intend to “improve” with regards to “river basin management” and then look for the most effective way to make that improvement. Given the regional legal framework and roles defined in Protocols and founding multi-national agreements, RBOs will certainly be involved in the process. But they may not always be the best counterpart for leading an effort to improve management.
- Significant internal inconsistencies hampered clarity of program goals and direction under the original design. The initial design documents assumed a focus on OKACOM and IRWM, but the program was funded with a biodiversity earmark that should focus effort more on conservation. Activities funded by the earmark must meet strict criteria for “biodiversity protection.” The evolution of work plans, the PMP and revised SO Framework (2005) attempted to ameliorate this issue and increased focus on addressing the key threats to biodiversity in the basin. Meanwhile, USAID has been constantly adjusting and redefining its strategic framework, regional role, program objectives and standard indicators, requiring further design adjustments. This constant change in the demands for reporting and guidance from Washington has been detrimental, and impacts the original design assumptions.
- The strategy and structure of the program should be revised to fit the new USAID Framework for Foreign Assistance (Natural Resources and Biodiversity Element), regional criteria, and develop more specific goals than “improved management.” The Mission may need to promote more appropriate definitions for regional programs and indicators (e.g. regional cooperation) in the new USAID Framework and reporting structure. If funding is reduced in the future, more focus will be needed regarding goals.

2.1.b Are clear and appropriate targets established for each metric category:

- (i) process [no],
 - (ii) inputs [needs improvement],
 - (iii) outputs and (iv) results (see Sec. VIII below)
- Should targets be adjusted? If so, how?

(i) The program should set and track “process metrics” for key factors relevant to achieving results: local leadership and local “champions” to provide continuity and ownership; a multi-year plan that is recognized and applied; peer review processes; systems to adjust resource allocation to better achieve results (although, this evaluation is an important tool for that); and procedures for sharing outputs while building lasting partnerships.

(ii) Clear input targets were not established in an appropriate manner – e.g. linked to outputs and activity components. The program could probably benefit from identifying and strengthening appropriate constituencies so that skills (services) supported by project inputs are more responsive to needs. Several personnel challenges – especially the delays and difficulties in hiring and maintaining effective Angolan country coordinator, and lack of direct IRBM project presence at both field and institutional (Luanda) levels—reflect a lack of ability to meet input targets. A large percentage of total funding went into the IRBM “project office” – an artificial and temporary construct, rather than long term institutional counterparts that could offer more sustainability. For example, the program could increase the involvement of universities in all 3 nations, and other local institutions, in workshops, studies and training, rather than relying on short term external consultants. Counterpart governmental institutions need local sources of support if they are to achieve sustainability.

(iii) Outputs – as contractually defined the project is “on track” for most outputs as of Sept06 (SAR) and May/07 (evaluation). The identification of “stakeholders” and how they value services could be improved. The evaluation team lacked the time and resources (and the program lacked sufficient maturity) to assess whether outputs were truly effective and efficient in reaching desired results and outcomes.

(iv) Results – Nine results were defined (as enumerated in the SOW for the Evaluation under “results metrics” pg. 8). Some were over-ambitious compared to funding and project time frame. Reflections on status for each as listed in the SOW, as of Nov 2006:

1. Biologically important areas identified for improved management:

- Making good progress toward some useful results, but with limited geographic scope because the area is huge compared to resources. Much more could be done if program is broadened or continued.

2. Mechanisms for regional dialogue and collaboration in place (for selected RBOs):
 - Greatly improved compared to pre-project status/trends.
3. Potential conflicts over shared water resources avoided or mitigated:
 - Some progress made – but efforts toward this important goal need better documentation (ARD is committed to track this result per Monitoring and Evaluation Plan; but has not submitted the required reports). The IRBM team needs to improve reporting to comply with approved PMP and M&E Plan.
4. Tools, procedures and human capacity in place for improved basin-wide planning and management:
 - Progress has been made, but the concept of basin-wide planning and management needs clarification in terms of: (a) what is reasonable to attempt, (b) by whom, and (c) how best to do that.
5. Projects that address basin-wide environmental threats and improve welfare implemented or underway:
 - Progress apparent in Mucusso transboundary area, but this could be further expanded. Any community work needs to be more integrated with regional (basin wide) environmental issues and the prioritized, regional efforts to address them. The community work under a regional program must be designed as a supporting activity for regional work, not as an end in and of itself.
6. OKACOM is operational and providing effective regional services (Secretariat for OKACOM established):
 - Lots of effort invested in this, and showing some results. But more institutional development required for OKACOM to reflect some of the “operational and providing effective services” goals. This might be better classified as an output, rather than a result.
7. Biodiversity and ecological services in the Okavango Basin conserved
 - This is an over-ambitious long-term goal, and is required due to the dependence on biodiversity earmark funds.
8. Institutions and human capacity strengthened to better address river basin management issues:
 - This process has begun, but will be much longer-term than this project.
9. Results being applied and having the desired impact on regional, national and local planning and development activities. Specifically, results being used (a) to mitigate conflicts, (b) alleviate poverty, and (c) support decision making and analysis that improves allocation of water and conservation of ecosystem services

-This is a valid, long-term, “outcome” scale result. Measurable impacts for this result cannot be expected in the 4-year time frame of the initial project. However, these results come from the strategy, which originally was to run through FY 2010.

2.1.c What progress is evident toward the established targets in each category? [see SAR reports] Is the project likely to meet valid targets by its completion date in September, 2008? [see comments above]

It is good to review the second question periodically with IRBM and stakeholders. “Will we meet the targets before the end of the project?”

2.2.a (i) What approaches and interventions that have been most effective in supporting achievement of the objective and planned results (see Sec. II)?

Analysis of SARs sheds some light on this. It seems that some of the regional activities on the ground such as hydromet and biodiversity appear relatively more cost-effective in terms of useful and lasting results. While SARs and other reports provide data on progress, a final evaluation will be needed to judge the relationship between that progress and the overall objectives and final results.

(ii) What has been spent on each component and administration of the project, compared to results from each?

Detailed financial analysis by component is not available because the budget was not structured to provide it (The IQC mechanism uses a contract that reimburses for “time and materials”). There were estimates for budgets by component in Work Plans. The work plans for the first two years indicated that component (1) OKACOM - received the most funding, followed by (3) community work (including sub-agreements with World Vision and ACADIR). Component (2), for information systems, technical training related to water and biodiversity, initially had the lowest budget. Because it seemed effective in contributing to desired results, efforts were made by USAID to realign the budget to provide more support to component 2. These efforts led to contract amendments so that the three components are expected to have similar budgets in the third year of activities.

There may be a perception issue that “a majority of the funds are being spent in Gaborone and on OKACOM-Secretariat.” Is that valid? How best to address it?

(iii) What were in-kind contributions from collaborating partners, and how effective has this been?

This question was raised by Namibia. This program did not attempt to quantify “in-kind contributions,” partly because it would have been too difficult to define and monitor. In general, the cooperative plans made with partners, including other

donors, were useful. And despite bumps in the road, they worked or are working well in several cases (Sida-Secretariat coordination; GEF on hydromet).

2.2.b What has been the distribution of program benefits among participating countries? How has each country and its riparian population gained from the project, training, internship opportunities, etc.?

The IRBM team provided an estimate. But it depends on how you define “benefit.” In the big picture, even if the project had spent every penny in Angola, down stream nations could be the primary beneficiaries if the investments improved the availability and quality of water over the long term.

2.3. Specifically, how have project activities impacted OKACOM and related organizations that affect river basin management? What changes are evident? What has been most effective in producing these changes? What realistic options and strategies could be pursued to enhance sustainability, and to institutionalize regional “benefits sharing” or payments for ecosystem services?

These changes have been described in SARs. For OKACOM, one important change was a growth in understanding among delegations regarding issues that had blocked progress in the past, such as misconceptions about procedures and the proposed secretariat. Better translation and facilitation helped resolve some of these.

2.4. Are any other noteworthy impacts (beyond the stated objective and planned results) evident?

-Yes:

- a) The regional collaborations via task forces (data management, sediment flows, biodiversity);
- b) Promoting donor coordination and collaboration via structured meetings, assigning roles, co-funding arrangements and a common matrix for activities;
- c) Supporting Angola to engage effectively in regional planning and programs – not only OKACOM, but forestry, KAZA, and others;
- d) Supporting Angolan efforts to complete and initiate implementation of NBSAP with regional linkages; and helping them initiate field work for forest inventories and management in trans-boundary area.

2.5. Could a different mix of activities, or a different approach, contribute more effectively or more efficiently to achieve the objective? How could future activities be adjusted to improve program performance, as defined in the approved USAID PMP?

Less focus on “Secretariat” per se, and more focus on assisting OKACOM to provide services in fulfillment of its mandate. Better allocation of resources to achieve jobs at hand.

2.6. What are the comparative advantages of USAID as a regional cooperating partner in this sector? How do stakeholders perceive USAID's activities in the sectors of regional water (shared river basin management) and biodiversity conservation?

Compared to GEF, the flexibility, responsiveness and timeliness of USAID support (provided through a contractual implementing partner) seemed to be sincerely appreciated by all partners.

2.7. What specific adjustments, if any, are recommended for the ongoing program within the next 18 months?

Focus on whatever is necessary for a smooth transition to the next "phase" of USAID support in this sector. Provide continuity.

2.8. Looking to the future, what are the top priorities and gaps in assistance that are especially suited to regional interventions and USAID as a donor, for (i) improved management of shared river basins (ii) biodiversity conservation within the framework of river basin management and (iii) implementation of related SADC protocols?

See below.

2.9. What is recommended for a follow-on program? What inputs and outputs should be targeted? What approach should be used? What mix of implementing partner(s) and institutional mechanisms would be most effective?

A follow-on program should: (a) respond to clear and strong regional needs/priorities; (b) comply with USAID biodiversity funding criteria; (c) fit the "regional definition"; (d) build upon the best aspects of the existing program and relationships, and (e) respond to USG-STATE priorities in the region. Perhaps continuity such as – "Enhanced management of the Okavango Basin that sustains biodiversity and ecosystem services while improving livelihoods for target populations."

This could promote participatory, equitable and transparent processes for land use planning, policies and multi-sector investments in wildlife management and conservation-based tourism. To balance local priorities with the criteria for USAID biodiversity funding, it needs to promote economic development while reducing threats to sustainability and biodiversity; e.g. It could address issues of unregulated/inappropriate land and water use that impact quality and flow regimes (water and sediments). The effort would focus on getting results that favorably impact people and the environment, while respecting, working under the auspices of , and utilizing when appropriate, regional institutions (SADC, OKACOM, KAZA? Others?).

This approach allows Sida to continue the institutional support for OKACOM, and GEF-EPSMO (FAO) to continue with their project to develop a management plan, while defining a separate but complementary niche for USAID.

A note regarding USAID terminology: *“Project” versus “Program”*

Many people use “program” and “project” interchangeably – which is ok. But FYI, in this set of comments, “Project” refers to what was contracted with ARD Inc. and implemented by a team under the name, “Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project” or IRBM.

“Program” refers to the broader USAID Regional Environmental Program (formerly known as S.O. 17, Improved Management of Shared River Basins). The Program is on a different (longer) time frame than the project. The Program is based upon a Regional USAID Strategy Statement, USAID Foreign Assistance Framework, and includes USAID management and evaluations, SADC relationships (separate agreement, also longer than IRBM), etc.

In this particular case, while USAID could use multiple mechanisms to implement a program, it has relied solely on the IRBM project as the implementing partner, so there is not a significant distinction between project and program when it comes to execution.